

CHRISTIAN DRAMA

edited by
JOHN HESTER

cover designed by JOHN PIPER

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All opinions expressed in these pages are personal, and are not necessarily those of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain

1. 3 Number 9

Spring, 1958

Published by:

THE RELIGIOUS DRAMA SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

166 SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, LONDON, W.C.2

Telephone: COVent Garden 3304/5

CHRISTIAN DRAMA: 6/6 per annum (post free)

CHRISTIAN DRAMA



[Pictorial Press Ltd., Salisbury Square, London, E.C.4]
REX TRAGICUS.

. . . Go Thy way,
 Thy way, Thou guiltless Man, and satisfy
 By Thine approach, each their beholding eye.
 Not as a thief, shalt Thou ascend the mount,
 But like a person of some high account:
 The Cross shall be Thy stage: and Thou shalt there
 The spacious field have for Thy theatre.
 Thou art that *Roscius*, and that marked-out man,
 That must this day act the tragedian,
 To wonder and affrightment: Thou art He,
 Whom all the flux of nations comes to see,
 Not those poor thieves that act their parts with Thee:
 Those act without regard, when once a King,
 And God, as Thou art, comes to suffering.
 No, no, this scene from Thee takes life and sense,
 And soul and spirit, plot and excellence.
 Why then, begin, great King! ascend Thy throne,
 And thence proceed to act Thy Passion,
 To such a height, to such a period raised,
 As Hell, and Earth, and Heaven may stand amazed . . .
 And we (Thy lovers) while we see Thee keep
 The laws of action, will both sigh and weep . . .

From *Rex Tragicus, or Christ going to His*
Cross, by Robert Herrick (1591–1674).

EDITORIAL

The account which follows of a Passion Play in Uganda and the photographs of a young African in the part of Our Saviour raise again the question of whether it is either right or expedient that the person of Christ should be portrayed by an actor, either in church or on stage, screen or radio. Let it be said at once that there are many who will always be unhappy to see Our Lord represented in such a way, as there are those who are unhappy to see Him represented in a stained-glass window or a statue, and the sincerity of this opinion must be respected. Yet when applied to the representation of Christ in drama, this unhappiness may be based on two misconceptions: the first about the implications of the Incarnation, the other about the basic function of an actor.

Of these, the first is more important. For is it not contained in the very fact of God's being made flesh that He thereby subjected himself to all features of human life excepting the sinful? and a characteristic of all human beings is their liability to representation, artistic or otherwise, by their fellows. To deny Christ's deliberate willingness to be portrayed as are other men may spring from a timidity to acknowledge His true manhood and all it implies. The second, less important misconception, perhaps equally controversial. It hinges upon whether an actor should to the best of his ability "become" the character he portrays, or acknowledging the impossibility of this should be judged as himself interpreting the part undertaken. Are not great actors always men and women who are never entirely identified with the parts they are playing, while the merely good ones are frequently commended for their remarkable degree of self-submersion in their parts? The influences of Brecht in the Berliner Ensemble and of Priestley in his recent lectures on "The Art of the Dramatist" encourage this view of the essential separation of actor and character. When understood, the relevance of this theory to the matter of the enactment of the rôle of Jesus will be readily seen. No risk of sacrilege should occur for the actor will never be thought of *as* Jesus but recognised as himself playing the part—a sinful creature representing the all-holy God whose Incarnation looked forward by implication to this very eventuality.

Great care should certainly be taken in the casting of the rôle of Christ, and it may well be that the actor should be technically anonymous though the audience might realise his identity. The changing power which often comes to players entrusted with sacred rôles is well known, and there can be few greater honours for men and women than to be assigned the parts of Christ or His saints. It would be most interesting if readers of *Christian Drama* would send their opinions on this whole question, particularly in these days when the Lord Chamberlain's general authority is being increasingly challenged. At present all stage portrayals of Christ outside church are banned by him. Say whether you prefer that this should be so or not.

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The congratulations of all readers of *Christian Drama* are extended to Mr. Robert Speaight, a Vice-President of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain, who was awarded the C.B.E. in the New Year Honours. He created the part of Becket in *Murder in the Cathedral*, and played Our Lord in the original broadcasts of *The Man Born to be King*.

As we go to press, news comes from Milan of the enthusiastic reception given at La Scala to the operatic version of *Murder in the Cathedral*. It is the work of Ildebrando Pizzetti, who has also prepared the libretto, from the translation of T. S. Eliot's play by Monsignore Alberto Castelli. The décor is by Piero Zuffi, and the producer is Miss Margherita Wallmann. We may feel considerable satisfaction that the influence of British religious drama should be so far extended, and hope that the Royal Opera House, which has just given us Miss Wallmann's production of *The Armelites*, will in the near future enable us to hear this new work also.

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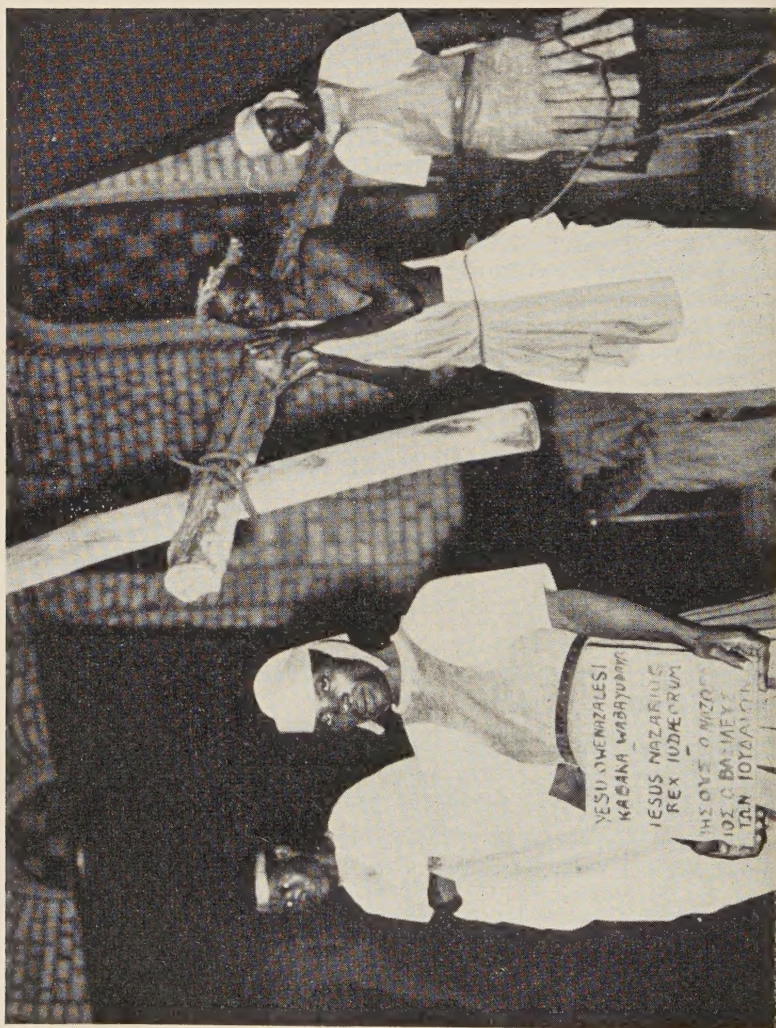
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CHRISTIAN DRAMA



[Pictorial Press Ltd., Salisbury Square, London, E.C.4]

THE PASSION IN AFRICA

By JOHN TAYLOR

In 1954, a Passion Play was acted by theological students and their wives at Mukono in Uganda. The following passages are extracted by permission from The Passion in Africa published in 1957 by A. R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd. The photographs are by Hans Leuenberger and are reproduced by arrangement with Pictorial Press Ltd.

From time to time the students used to perform a series of short Parable Plays, either as a part of our own worship in the College chapel, or occasionally as an evangelistic medium outside. In these plays, which never lasted more than ten minutes, great freedom of invention was enjoyed. In the story of the Rich Fool, for example, the fat, self-indulgent farmer was drawn into a violent argument with his cautious old steward, who advised against his extravagant new building programme. "Whose is this wealth, anyway?" he shouted, his voice rising as his rage mastered him. "Whose are these fields? Mine. Whose are the vineyards? Mine. Whose are the slaves and the wine presses and the barns? Mine! mine! mine!" Then rising to his feet with the day's takings in his pudgy hands, he screamed: "Whose is this money? Answer me!" And in that instant he staggered and stiffened as the stroke fell on him. His servants, rigid with horror, watched the coins slipping through the desperately clutching fingers, and then caught him as he fell. As they slowly carried him away on a litter down the central aisle of the Chapel, a reader spoke the last words of the parable: "But God said unto him, Thou fool. This night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be?" and the sanctuary was left empty, save for the shining coins which strewn the floor. Of a very different type was the large-scale pageant play, *King Saul*, performed in an open-air arena. This lasted from half-past five till eight o'clock; the sun setting behind a group of forest trees as the back-cloth, and the final scenes of the tragedy were played in darkness by the light of a few concealed lamps. With a cast of more than seventy, much of the mood and movement of the story was conveyed by great masses of players—the crowd of Israelite men and women despairing under foreign oppression, or wildly exultant at the coronation of their king; the army straggling into camp, flushed with victory and laden with spoil; or cowering round their fires under the taunts of Goliath; the great battle of Gilboa at the end of the story, when the whole arena was filled with Hebrews and Philistines, swords clanging on metal shields, spears and arrows flying across the scene, an African mêlée that was both battle and dance, until the whole audience was on its feet and yelling with excitement. And against the background of this ebb and flow of human emotion, presented almost as a ballet with specially composed African music sung by a hidden choir, moved the figure of Saul, lonely in

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his greatness and folly, and universal in his tragedy, flanked by the two persons he could never understand—Samuel, the prophet of the Kingship of God, and David, the child.

The performance of the Passion Play was always felt to be a most solemn undertaking which could only be attempted when the religious life of the College was strong and our community deeply united. Although the actual rehearsals lasted a very short time—two weeks of intensive work was the usual period—the spiritual preparation was much more prolonged. It was customary in the College routine for all students and staff to maintain an unbroken chain of prayer in the Chapel every day from morning till evening, each taking his turn of ten minutes at the appointed time, so that all might know that at any moment someone was there on his knees before the Sanctuary. Throughout the period of Lent the Passion Play was one of the invariable subjects for prayer at these times. During the preceding six weeks all the daily services, addresses and meditations were designed to constitute a steady pilgrimage of thought, "going up to Jerusalem," approaching the supreme events of the Passion.

The play was performed in the College Chapel throughout Holy Week and on Easter Monday in 1954. It was an unhappy time of acute political tension in Uganda. The Kabaka, the king of Buganda, had been deported the previous November; there was racial antagonism of a kind never known before in this country; very many Christians were leaving the Church. Because of an already very full programme the Warden of the College had decided that a Passion Play was out of the question that year. But the African members of the staff with many of the students pleaded with him to reverse his decision. "This year of all times," they said, "we must show forth this Story. There is no other word to which our people will listen now; but they will still come to hear this Word." And so it proved. More than nine hundred people of all races came to Mukono during Holy Week to see the play, and if our small chapel had been three times as large we should still have filled it every night.

The Passion was presented in a prologue and four scenes, after each of which there were a few prayers led by one of the clergy on the College staff. The prologue showed very briefly the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. As the choir broke into the Negro Spiritual, "Ride on, Jesus," through the drawn curtains which concealed the chancel and sanctuary there streamed a host of men and women, waving palm branches and crying, "Hosanna!" As the Christ himself appeared a great shout went up, and a bunch of children came running up the aisle to greet him. One of the priests angrily silenced the multitude and rebuked the Lord for encouraging such blasphemy, only to receive the quiet reply, "If these would hold their peace the very stones would immediately cry out." At this the crowd renewed its shouts and the priest was jostled to one side. But suddenly they noticed that Christ was weeping, and fell silent again. After a moment he raised his head and, looking out over the congregation, he spoke his terrible lament. "If only you had known, even you, at least

in this your day, the things which would bring you peace. But they are hidden now from your eyes. For the days are coming upon you when your enemies shall dig a trench about you, and circle you round and keep you in on every side, and shall lay you even to the ground, and your children too. They shall not leave one stone standing on another. Because you never knew the time when God visited you." Then in the shocked and bewildered silence he seemed to recover himself, and turned to John at his side, saying, "Let us finish the journey now." As he started to move forward down the aisle the children began to shout again, "Hosanna!" and danced before him, and soon the whole crowd, following, was shouting as before, and the choir sang on, as the voices died in the distance, "Ride on, Conquering King; I want to go to heaven in the morning." On the last notes of their song the curtains slowly parted, revealing the Upper Room, and the low table made ready for the Passover, the striped cloths on the couches glowing under the lamps, and two servants setting out the cups and platters, the basin and towel. The four scenes that followed showed successively the Last Supper, the Trial before Pilate, the Crucifixion, and the Upper Room again on Easter Day.

... The essential character of the Africans' acting demanded a completely naturalistic presentation of the story. It was this which made it impossible for them even to conceive of presenting such a play without showing the central Figure. But at the time of the first Passion Play in 1948 it was realised that in the small College chapel the scene of the Crucifixion must to some degree be presented symbolically. Therefore, after the arrival at Calvary, a curtain bearing three crosses in silhouette hid from view the Christ and the two thieves, and the scene was played before this curtain until the departure of the last little group of weeping women, when it was drawn slowly back to disclose the bare Sanctuary dressed as for Easter Eve.

... It is perhaps not an exaggeration to claim, on behalf of the African Christians who made it, that this play was an attempt to make visible to others a vision which, by the grace of God, they had seen. In their names and in the name of their Lord, this record now goes forth to a wider public. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full."

DOROTHY L. SAYERS

1893-1958.

By PATRICK McLAUGHLIN.

The death of Dorothy Leigh Sayers deprives the nation of a great entertainer, a distinguished scholar, and a superb craftsman of letters; it deprives the Church of a devoted servant, a powerful apologist, and a soul of remarkable sanctity.

Readers of *Christian Drama* may be assumed to be familiar already with the sacred plays which Miss Sayers wrote for the Festivals of Canterbury, Lichfield and Colchester,* as also with the radio cycle *The Man born to be King*; but they need to be reminded how she brought to these plays both an accomplished craft, a power of construction and of characterisation learned in the hard school of advertising (with its exacting demand for the most vivid image in the fewest words) and of detective stories, "that severe and civilised form" (sc. of fiction) which demands a mastery of highly specialised techniques (such as bell-ringing, railway regulations, legal procedure, rare poisons and human physiology) and a tight control of narrative and logic.

The value of her plays to the movement for religious drama lies precisely in these qualities of craftsmanship; it was all gain that she exercised these qualities on Christian themes, for without them the themes might have remained in the oblivion or contempt to which the world had consigned them for many generations—and justly. "Let me tell you, good Christian people," she wrote in the preface to the published version of *The Man born to be King*, "an honest writer would be ashamed to treat a nursery tale as you have treated the greatest drama in history; and this in virtue, not of his faith, but of his calling." May every religious dramatist ponder these words when he (or more often she) is asked or disposed to write a play on some religious theme! "For a work of art which is not good and true *in art* is not good and true in any other respect."

Perhaps the greatest service which Miss Sayers rendered the Church as a playwright was that, as Professor C. S. Lewis put it, "she never sank the artist and entertainer in the evangelist." Evangelism as popularly understood was in her view one of the biggest impediments to conversion in the world of to-day. One of her last utterances was on this very point, when, speaking of the typical citizen of modern secularised society (and more especially of the thinkers and technicians, whether of the sciences or the arts, who form the mental climate of our times), she said, "It is quite useless for us to approach them along traditional

The Zeal of Thy House and *The Devil to Pay* (Canterbury, 1937 and 1939); *He that should come* (B.B.C., 1938); *The Man born to be King* (B.B.C., 1942); *The Just Vengeance* (Lichfield, 1946); *The Emperor Constantine* (Colchester, 1951, for the Festival of Britain).

evangelistic lines; they cannot understand our language nor accept our premises . . . It is for us to learn their language, and to undertake that most difficult of all intellectual disciplines, which is to start imaginatively from their premises without for a moment allowing the will to assent to the imagination."

The imaginative sharing of the premises of such widely differing people was what captured their interest and gave her work the touch of genius which it often bore: the steadfast adherence of her own will to the firm unalterable premises of the Christian faith was what gave her work the toughness and power to convince so many readers, and what sustained her through the many hard trials of her life.

These trials were rarely if ever mentioned, and few people ever suspected them. Yet of all the bright hopes with which she set out upon life, after a distinguished career at Oxford as a Scholar of Somerville and with a first-class degree in Modern Languages (it was her choice of Medieval French which first directed her attention to Medieval Philosophy, to Dante and *il dolce stil nuovo*, and of course to the Song of Roland) few were fulfilled without a strong dose of disillusion and suffering.

Professor Lewis in the panegyric which he composed for the Memorial Service, held at St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, on January 15th 1958, suggested that the problem of the architect William of Sens in *The Zeal of thy House* was a projection of the author's own problem—but of course a deliberate statement made in full consciousness that, whilst the true disinterested service of the work is the artist's first and only concern, yet "without grace it is a dangerous virtue . . . (for) from the beginning (of the work) personal pride is entering into the architect's character." Yet few artists have mortified (and thereby sanctified) their ego as did Miss Sayers; nothing more quickly roused her anger than questions (to her impertinent) about her private opinions or references to her own tastes and disposition. She regarded herself essentially as "The Servant of the Word" and she expected to be so regarded by others.

The mortification of artistic pride was only one among the trials and sacrifices which she had to meet. Yet she met and made them all with the firm faith that (as she wrote in the preface to *The Just Vengeance*: "whoso will carry the Cross, the Cross will carry him." And as she deliberately and gladly carried her cross, The Cross did carry her. Out of tribulation came joy—and some glad consolations. Though she declined the offer of a Lambeth Doctorate which Dr. Temple made in recognition of her plays, essays and tireless lectures to troops during the War, preferring to wait till she had accomplished her translation of the Divine Comedy, she delighted in the generous recognition of the work which prompted the offer; and when Dr. G. M. Trevelyan became Chancellor of the University of Durham and chose to confer on her a Doctorate of Letters *honoris causa* for her translation of the *Inferno* alone, she accepted it gratefully. She found constant delight in her connection with the parish of Soho, of which she was Churchwarden from

1952 until her death, and where she was able to promote her interests in the sacred liturgy and in sacred drama which is its extension. But perhaps her deepest concern and joy was in Saint Anne's House, with which she had been connected since its opening in 1943 and of which she became Chairman in 1950. It was on St. Anne's day last year that she made her last public discourse: it was the zealous service of this work which brought her so much to London throughout the autumn and which may well have overtaxed her strength. Truly it may be written of her:

The Zeal of Thy House hath eaten me up.

TWO OPINIONS OF JOHN PIPER

John Piper represents within himself a fusion of three worlds which have too frequently been torn apart—the worlds of the Church, the theatre and of painting. It is therefore a privilege that he has consented to execute design for the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain, which will be used among other purposes for the cover of Christian Drama from time to time. An article by him on



[Photo: Hugo van Wadenoyen]

designing for the Church and the Theatre will be published in the near future, and will incorporate photographs of the new cope recently commissioned by the Dean of Chichester.

ERIC NEWTON

writes as a professional critic.

In one sense of a suspiciously fashionable word, John Piper is as "contemporary" as any artist of our time. He has always been acutely sensitive to those vague stirrings that lead artists into uncharted territory and tempt critics to add to their vocabulary of "trends." When, in his youth, Paris was exploring the possibilities of collage, playing games with textures and thinking in terms of imagined *shapes* and their relationships other than visible *things* and their appearance, Piper pushed his researches into pure abstraction as far as most of his contemporaries and further than any of his compatriots.

When those early works appear to-day in mixed exhibitions they do not date, nor, if one knows his later work, could one think that anyone but John Piper had produced them. They are as valid and as personal as ever.

But his later work proved that abstraction was no more than a necessary discipline for a journey undertaken by an artist who turned out to be both a humanist and a craftsman. In those two respects Piper is *not* typically contemporary. Even in its widest sense, Humanism has never been as unpopular as it is to-day: and Craftsmanship—the understanding of the chosen medium, the acceptance of its limitations and the power to make them eloquent—is still declining.

Piper has often escaped from the tyranny of paint in order to make the most of the three-dimensional world of the stage, where light and colour



Photo: Edward Mandinian]

[Designed by John Piper for the Royal L

ROBERT HELPMANN AS SATAN IN THE BALLET "JOB."

are interchangeable, or of the intensity of stained-glass in which transmitted light opens up a new set of possibilities: if he designs an ecclesiastical vestment he at once thinks in terms of needlework and the texture of flexible, woven stuff.

This has not been done with understanding or enthusiasm since the Renaissance. Piper is, in effect, a Renaissance man, with all its reverence for tradition and its knowledge that tradition is something to build on as well as to revere. His reinterpretations of Gothic romanticism, his evocative accounts of the patina of architecture, his statements about mountain structure which deepen our knowledge of mountains but also of Turner

from whom they originate, look back into the past but use the eyes of to-day. His stage designs and stained-glass have the same intelligent understanding of the continuity of civilisation.

This is romanticism, though it is not quite nostalgia. For behind the romanticism is a toughness, which first appeared in art when Cézanne finally decided to abandon the invertebrate language of Impressionism.

MOELWYN MERCHANT

writes on his religious art.

We have only to take Creation seriously and every painter's object becomes a religious symbol of sorts—but this is too cloudy a vantage point from which to view John Piper's religious art. There has never been any lack of reverence for "nature" in his painting, whether in the interpretation of a broad landscape or particularisation over a piece of rock on Tryfan or at Portland; even his periods of abstract art have veered successively into collage, with the incorporation of the real object itself into the design.

But the precise and particular object in his designs for stained-glass, hitherto his principal works of "religious art," have a different dimension; they may best be called "credal symbols." To be more precise—the designs for the window in Oundle School Chapel, installed in 1956, were required for nine tall lancets; since they had roughly the proportions of the human figure, a long tradition would suggest the drawing of saints with their appropriate symbols. It was a bolder undertaking in every way to take one Person only, and make the nine lights a set of variations on the figure of Our Lord; and it required penetration of an order different from the artist's vision to group them in theological succession: Mary, Truth, Life, Wine, Water, Bread, Judge, Teacher, Shepherd. Nor was this grouping a pedantic piece of pictorialism; the figures in their variety are held together by colour and idiom in painterly fashion, not by mere illustrator's craft.

At St. Andrew's, Plymouth, a wide expanse of glass is held in design by a cruciform pattern, within which the symbols of the Passion appear to make up a decorative relationship; in fact, theological significances are here again inseparable from the visual patterns seen by the painter's eye. This is characteristic of John Piper, the full craftsman's submission to the job in hand, accepting the "interference" of mullion and lead, and making it a part of his draughtsmanship, while accepting the facts of the creed as the raw material for his interpretation.

LONDON THEATRE

By JOHN HESTER.

Mr. Peter Brook's production of *The Tempest*, which was introduced to London from Stratford at Drury Lane on December 5th, is afflicted with the malady which is bedevilling his brilliance as a director of plays. A characteristic of genius is the realisation of its own limitations, so that the attention is concentrated only upon what is best: Mr. Brook seems at present to be denied that realisation. For had his love and skill been concentrated only upon the direction of this great play, the result might have been very different. As it is, one is so far exasperated by his musical effects and décor (if these terms may be thus relaxed) that both the beauty of the verse and the producer's skill are almost forgotten. The "sweet music" of which Shakespeare speaks is not there, nor is there visual beauty in Mr. Brook's unhappy palette: how sad this is, for in the midst of all the noise and ugliness there shone a performance of very great beauty by Sir John Gielgud as the banished duke. This turned the closing scenes especially into a moving exhibition of religious drama: his Prospero changed before our eyes from a mood of bitter revenge to one of joyful forgiveness, a conversion effected both by the true love of Ferdinand and Miranda and by the penitence of the wicked usurpers. The final scenes of *The Tempest* are considered by many to be the last which can be ascribed with certainty to Shakespeare. His magic put behind him, joy bringing a happy end to his fury, Prospero nevertheless realises his need, and drawing the audience about him to aid him as he returns to his inheritance, he states a basic Christian truth,

". . . my ending is despair,
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
Let your indulgence set me free."

Unlike *The Tempest*, *A Stranger in the Tea* is not a great play. It was presented at the Arts Theatre on December 26th, the work of Edward and Dorothy Percy. Telling of an absentee clergyman who lives in Richmond but holds a cure in Cumberland, it flickers to life only in the last act when it finally admits what has always threatened, blunt melodrama. The stranger who appears in Mr. Jennings' green tea is a diabolical and invisible monkey, penetrating from demonic outer space the envelope which we are told protects each of us from evil. He appears to have been launched into the parson's imagination by the failure of an early love for his half-sister, he vanishes when there appears hope of improbable married bliss between Jennings and his cardboard amanuensis.

and returns in triumph when she most wisely turns him down. Throughout this nonsense Mr. Robert Eddison acted with great determination and almost made us believe in both the silly stranger and his even sillier victim.

Three weeks later saw the the London première of Francis Poulenc's opera, *The Carmelites*, at Covent Garden. It is a study of fear, and more specifically of the deep fears within the imagination, and their domination by the power of Christ. The central figure is a girl of noble birth, a prey to fancy, who seeks refuge in a Carmelite convent. The year is 1789, the country France. Of course since the days of St. Antony of Egypt men and women have been discovering that the Religious Life is far from a refuge, indeed is rather an advance to the battlefield; and so it proves for Sister Blanche of the Agony of Christ, whose spiritual battle is enjoined long before the outward peace of the convent is shattered by the revolutionary mob. The terrors of that invisible battle are portrayed through the dying moments of the aged Mother Superior (sung with great dramatic force by Miss Jean Watson). Yet always the power of the unseen Redeemer is at work under the strange principles of life within Him, and through the characters of several nuns we are introduced to the doctrine of vicarious suffering and death. When the Carmelites are called from their living death on earth to execution at the guillotine there is no disruption of purpose; both are contained within their religious vocation of complete self-offering. Blanche, having fled the convent when the nuns had taken a vow of martyrdom, is given grace to rejoin them on the scaffold. Her haunting fears dissolve in the realisation that suffering and death are the gates to Christian victory and triumph.

The work was cast from the resident company at the Royal Opera House and staged magnificently in settings and costumes by Georges Wakhevitch. Of the music technically I am not qualified to speak, though it seemed (within the limitations of a subject only moderately well suited to opera) to catch throughout the solemn grandeur of its great theme. Like others of Les Six, Poulenc has evidently come a long way upon both spiritual and musical paths since those Parisian days some forty years ago. Among the singers Miss Elsie Morison was most moving, and one wondered again at the excellence of the acting in our opera companies to-day. Everyone who can do so should enjoy the experience which is *The Carmelites* and wonder once more at the power of Christian vocation.

Next to our love of Himself and the things to which it may inspire us, the most precious of God's gifts to humanity is perhaps the love of man and wife, reflecting as it should the perfect harmony of the Holy Trinity itself. Yet with the factor of human imperfection introduced, marriage is often far from what God intends. Ugly shadows fall across it. But it remains the environment in which the majority are called to work out for themselves God's call to perfection. In Mr. Tennessee William's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Comedy Theatre, January 30th) the shadow darkening the marriage of Maggie and Brick is a grievous one—that of a homosexual relationship to which the man was at one time perhaps innocently attracted. Under that terrible grating of personality upon personality, that

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Photo: Houston Rogers

impossibility of ever communicating oneself to one's neighbours which Mr. Williams has often suggested as characteristic of the human dilemma, disaster had overtaken Brick's friend Skipper. And in the wake of that disaster the ruin of his marriage with Margaret. Alcohol and maudlin disillusion have seized the husband; yet through it all Maggie the Cat prefers to suffer on her hot tin roof rather than jump off safely into another life. For her the only reality is the love of her husband, and in his spiritual poverty and sickness she is determined both to remain faithful and to win him back. The play ends on a note of clear hope, somewhat muted in this production by the curious omission of the last line of the text. This note of hope may carry immense significance for the author's future, and comes like a blaze of light not only upon the preceding scenes of the play but also on practically the whole corpus of Tennessee Williams' brilliant work for theatre and cinema. Mr. Peter Hall presented the play at perhaps too slow a pace, within a setting by Mr. Leslie Hurry. Miss Kim Stanley (a product we are told of the New York "Method") played the title rôle with tremendous warmth; both she and the author obviously love the character of Margaret, and so do we. Mr. Leo McKern was Big Daddy, the richly vulgar father to Brick, eaten up with cancer, presenting in himself the tragedy of the dying materialist. His scene with his favourite son when they tell each other painful truths is the pivot of the play; before the truth Big Daddy crumbles, while Brick learns a basis for realistic hope. Members of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain will recall that this work was chosen by Mr. E. Martin Browne for the opening volume of the series of "Penguin Plays" which he is editing, and it is certainly the most important play to be produced on the London stage for many months.

By comparison, Mr. Graham Greene's new piece *The Potting Shed* is somewhat disappointing. Produced in London at the Globe Theatre by Mr. Michael MacOwan on February 5th, it is inevitable that it should be compared with Greene's only other play, *The Living Room*. From this process the new work emerges sadly. Throughout the play there is very little development visible in any character with the notable exception of the central one of James Callifer, a provincial journalist who when a small boy had been miraculously raised from the dead. For two acts the tension mounts as he prises out the truth about his childhood, for his family is one of militant old-style unbelievers and the living proof of the power of religious faith is something best forgotten: the unhappy beneficiary of the miracle returns home only at the time of his father's death and through the agency of an interfering child. Sir John Gielgud plays the part of James and builds up his performance superbly to the end of the second act. But at that point he hears the tremendous, converting truth about himself, and with it the news that it was his uncle, a priest amidst rationalist relatives, who prayed over him and restored him to life. The child, poor thing, had been torn apart, taught by this uncle, untaught by his father, and had sought death by suicide to escape from his dilemma. The uncle's prayer over the child's dead body had been "Let him live,

God. I love him. Let him live. I will give you anything if you will let him live. Take away what I love most. Take away my faith but let him live." And God accepted the sincerity of the prayer, accepted that most precious of offerings, as precious maybe as physical martyrdom. It is the sight of this drink-sodden uncle thirty years after his faith had departed, and the look of his room from which faith had also gone, that convince James of the miracle which is himself: and it is the sight of the nephew which signals the end of the priest's exile from the presence of God.

To this point the play grips the attention. But when we see James again he is grotesquely transformed, no longer desperate, searching, his change has been accomplished while the audience was at refreshment during the second interval. This is a thousand pities. One could not adjust oneself so quickly to the new man, jaunty, set on repairing his broken marriage in a mood of almost boyish romance. The only character whom one had felt one knew had himself become unreal. Perhaps the play's weakness lies in the fact that Mr. Greene's partiality is apparent throughout. He is committed to his faith in such a way as to dry up his sympathy with the opposition. The unbelievers are all dishonest with themselves in one way or the other: not just blind, but dishonest. One feels that one is being cheated, that there must be a catch, even though one agrees wholeheartedly with the play's Christian teaching. Is it not an essential of drama that it shows us a tension, a struggle, and in the case of religious drama a struggle between the forces of light and darkness? For the characters in *The Potting Shed* the struggle is decided thirty years before the play begins, it is just a matter of time. How one thought nostalgically of the insight we had in *The Living Room* into the struggle within Rose and her priestly uncle! as one looked at Mr. Paul Mayo's seedily realistic sets how one thought back to Mr. Leslie Hurry's skilfully oppressive décor for the earlier play! and how one almost cried again at the memory of that play's closing moments. For *The Potting Shed* ends only with a daub of psychological sugar—blotted out (mercifully) for most of the house by a swiftly descending curtain. The published text, however (Heinemann, 8s.6d.) tells us what we missed.

* * *

Mr. Cecil B. de Mille's mammoth film *The Ten Commandments* has been a spectacular box-office success at the Plaza Cinema, London, and is likely to be so wherever it is shown in the future. It is curiously entitled for the giving of the Law on Sinai is but one incident, and that not the most memorable, in its four-hour narrative of God's dealings with his chosen people and of the man Moses in particular. The real climax of the film is in its tremendously moving scenes of the departure from Egyptian bondage and the destruction of Pharaoh's hosts in the Red Sea—in these sequences de Mille handles the fleeing crowds with unforgettable skill, surging almost out of the screen in the joy of liberation. The film is constantly startling by its fundamentalist treatment of the Scriptural and

allied texts—for what amazing methods the good God uses to work out his purposes with men! It is not perhaps satisfactory actually to see the burning bush glowing with an almost Disneyesque lustre, or a type of guided missile carving the commandments on the tables of stone, but these may be only personal dislikes and should certainly stop no one from seeing this remarkable film. Full of devotion and reverence, yet it is well sustained in popular interest; glamorous only when this is proper; repainting vividly the scenes of God's mighty dealings with those who prepared the way for His Incarnation. Mr. Charlton Heston is Moses, and played him nobly and well except in the cotton-wool-beard scene at the end. Certainly many will add to that lapse the unfortunate introduction which is spoken by the producer himself, and will hesitate to accept outright his hint that the Exodus was a mighty blow on behalf of western democracy! But all should agree that the film provides a remarkable experience for good and generally treats seriously and devotedly of subjects which have often in the past defeated the interpretation of film makers.

THE CONVOCATION OF CANTERBURY AND RELIGIOUS DRAMA

On January 15th, 1958, Dr. Bell made his last speech before retirement to the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury. The motion which he proposed and which was carried unanimously was:

"That the House, recognising the Church's concern for contributions of the highest quality by artists and authors in the shaping of modern culture, offers a special welcome to the work done in recent years by poets, writers and producers in the revival of religious drama; expresses its gratitude to the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain; and trusts that the work thus begun may continue to go forward under wise direction."

The Bishop said that he believed that one of the causes of man's present discontents and troubles was the spiritual poverty of his culture. People to-day pay "far too much heed to economists, bankers, engineers, directors, business men and politicians and far too little attention to poets, philosophers, painters, sculptors, novelists of imagination, writers, teachers, musicians, even ballet dancers and every form of artist." Shelley said long ago "The poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

The Bishop went on to say "There are few greater factors of greater potential force and value in the shaping of culture than drama." Mentioning that the historic roots of all drama were in religion, he described the gulf which had grown between the two, leading in turn to a revival of

religious drama at the beginning of the present century. With the production of Masefield's *The Coming of Christ* in the nave of Canterbury Cathedral at Whitsuntide, 1928, "the poet and the artist re-entered the Church." The first directors of religious drama were appointed in certain dioceses in the 1930's, following the appointment of Mr. Martin Browne in the diocese of Chichester. The Bishop paid special tribute to Mr. Browne, Mr. T. S. Eliot and Mr. Christopher Fry, to the Pilgrim and New Pilgrim Players, and to the Religious Drama Society, which was "significant not only in relation to religious drama in this country but in relation to religious drama in other countries. There is no doubt that the religious drama development in Great Britain is regarded as a leading event in the whole of the world in its own field." The Bishop also pointed out that the re-creation of living drama by the Church had a highly significant influence, for it penetrated the regular theatre and plays came to be written giving a Christian interpretation of issues arising in everyday life. He wished to emphasise, however, "the importance of high standards being attained in religious drama of every kind. Plays must be good and well written plays. They must be works of art in their own domain—nothing second-rate would do. The actors must be well trained and the dramas well produced."

In the debate which followed, the Bishop of Bristol seconded the motion of the Bishop of Chichester. He commented on the two approaches in Christian plays, direct and indirect, and thought that for people outside the Church the second was more effective. He thought that in many places there was too much religious drama, yet the appeal of the eye was becoming increasingly easy, and television is becoming increasingly important. He added "As a means of evangelism there is no doubt that religious drama is one of the really effective instruments in the hands of the Church." The Bishop of Derby spoke especially of the need to maintain "in the kind of religious drama which is sanctioned for production in churches a proper standard of orthodoxy and of artistic merit." The Bishop of Birmingham said that drama must be developed in such a way that it expressed the deepest and best insight of mankind, while the Bishop of Leicester spoke specifically of the opportunities which occurred for collaboration with public authorities in drama, including religious drama.

The Bishop of Coventry expressed the hope that the Church would show an equal interest in drama and its kindred art of ballet. "I do not see why it should be given so little attention," he said, "because the Bible contains a number of stories of people dancing before the Lord." Both drama and ballet could be religious in the true sense of the word. "One of my reasons for mentioning the matter is that in Coventry we propose to do something about it in six months' time," the Bishop continued. He spoke also in favour of drama being presented in Church which was not necessarily Biblical in phraseology or the events portrayed: perhaps a rigid attitude against this springs from a false conception of the word "religious." "There is still a tendency to think of it as something divorced from life, as something narrow, exclusive and limited. That attitude more

than any other had tended to divorce the arts from the Church, thus making the arts more secular and the Church more wrongly pietistic." If the resolution were passed, "it would show the world of art that churchmen were grateful for their contribution and desired them to realise that whether or not they were regular churchmen those artists, dramatists and dancers who were seeking to express absolute truth and beauty were, whether they knew it or not, truly and undeniably religious."

In his closing remarks the Archbishop of Canterbury observed, "The ballet is for some people almost their only religion; it is extraordinary how captured people are by ballet. It is a fascinating art to be engaged in and I am glad to hear that the diocese of Coventry are going to do something about ballet." He paid tribute to Dr. Bell and spoke again of the part the Church had to take "and is taking, in building slowly and steadily that unifying culture which will one day come back, not only as a culture but as a religion as well."

DAVID GILL

comments.

To-day we live by Technology, are ruled by Bureaucracy, and are sustained by Big Business. The Gospel of the day is Materialism, the Evangelists are the Popular Press, and the Word is Money.

It is not hard to see what has stimulated Dr. Bell's call for more attention to be given to artists and the arts they practise. We are so engrossed in making money and then more money that the idea of doing something for love and little else is often embarrassing to us. Artists therefore have become "special" people (and ironically, because they have become specialists, they have sometimes made big money, too). But generally they are a class apart, nonconformist, odd, eccentric, definitely "out of this world." This divorce has been as fateful for our society as it has been for art and artists.

Dr. Bell, in order to excite interest in our predicament, is I suspect prepared to go to any extremes, ". . . even Ballet Dancers," he says. And so he might, for unfortunately Ballet more than any other art in this country has suffered the "grow-in-a-hot-house" treatment. For some it is something "fascinating and another religion" as the Archbishop of Canterbury was moved to observe. For others it is obscure, dull or, more damningly, just arty nonsense.

This is the main snag in the praiseworthy and bold suggestions of the Archbishop of Coventry when he came out strongly for religious ballets and ballets in churches. Despite some of the excesses of the Reformation we have preserved generally in our churches the arts of music, painting, sculpture and even mime, but dancing has never been found in our places of worship. In the East dancing has always been, amongst other things, a religious and ceremonial activity, but in our hemisphere it is something that has always been outside the church. The novelty or the shock of

introducing it now would obfuscate the value of it. There is also another consideration: dancing, in evolving as it did into ballet, stylised itself into a purely *theatrical* art, and is never successful when taken out of the theatre and done say in an arena, in a park or in a night-club. Mime on the other hand presents many opportunities for performance in church, allied as it is both to drama and to the Church's own Liturgy. The late Hilary Pepler long ago realised this potential power in mime, and set out with his productions of the *Stations of the Cross*, the *Nativity* and the *Mysteries of the Holy Rosary* to interest others. He also wrote detailed "scripts" and notes of these plays so that they could be produced by anybody.

In the theatre itself however there is a real scope for religious ballets. Religious that is in the broadest sense. Artists nowadays are growing increasingly aware of the need for personal commitment in their works, and what is more personally committing than a religious belief? The Church has itself in latter years moved out of the daily life of many people: perhaps in this coming together of Religion and Art both will grow again within us and not apart from us. Dame Edith Sitwell said once, I think, "I find it quite easy to believe in God, because I am a poet" . . . and there is a clue.

LETTERS FROM AMERICA

From Mr. Arthur McDonald, of Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia:

"... we have organised this year a Christian Drama team. We will tour *Christ in the Concrete City* throughout the academic year . . . the response to the play has been overwhelming. Our group has requests to present the play far beyond that which we will be able to fulfil. We are touring Presbyterian churches in West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina and Washington D.C. We also presented five performances of the play during the Christmas holidays for the Sixth Quadrennial Youth Convention of the Presbyterian Church U.S. at the University of Kentucky . . . the most exciting response was the number of people who saw the play two or three times.

"Next month we will present *Christ in the Concrete City* in a state (Virginia) drama festival. Not only will this give us an opportunity to have a good criticism of the play, it is also a wonderful opportunity for evangelism. We will not present the play at the festival in the context of a worship service as we usually do. Our presentation will give many college students attending the drama festival an opportunity to see an intelligent, mature approach to the Christian faith through drama."

* * *

From the Revd. Dr. Louis A. Haselmayer, Chairman, Department of English, Iowa Wesleyan College:

"... two years ago I was invited to speak at a convocation of a neighbouring university . . . I lectured on theological trends in the current New York season. At a coffee hour later, at which I anticipated a few students with polite questions, I found a group of almost fifty who kept me going for two more hours.

"I have just returned from my Christmas holidays in New York City where I saw the New York production of *Look Back in Anger*. It was extremely well done and certainly gives to American audiences a new insight into the contemporary British stage—a new voice, new techniques.

"... The current New York season is deadly serious in its leading plays—*Look Back in Anger*, *The Rope Dancers*, *Look Homeward, Angel*, the Bernstein musical *West Side Story*; even Inge's *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* (which has a happy resolution). But all these plays with varying success are probing, questioning, seeking—dealing with questions which are basically theological and which are not solved because of a one-sided view of human nature and divine grace.

"I hope you will continue in *Christian Drama* to deal with the theological implications of commercial drama."

THE NORTHERN PROVINCE

By PAMELA KEILY.

We started at the beginning of 1957 with the definite statement that Christian Communication (spurning the old-fashioned word "evangelism") was our objective.

We declared the writing of new plays was to have priority over all else in the pursuit of this objective.

And the "adviser" began with the idea of a "gay insouciance" being a necessary factor in the work.

All these admirable ideas still hold—although the third somewhat evaporates as the weight of effort, suit-cases, and years increases!

Looking back at the first three months in Manchester: the main undertaking was the work of a central diocesan touring group playing Christopher Fry's *Boy with a Cart*, and rehearsing with duplicate actors in the leading parts, so as to make a tour of the Diocese a moderately safe undertaking. This was not a highly finished production, but had a first-class spirit running through it. The usual difficulties of health and differing jobs, inevitably made such a large cast hard to get and keep together. Yet they did tour—and without the producer, who left them for Sheffield as soon as the dress-rehearsal was over. The fact that two willing assistant producers from the locality were prepared to take the responsibility of holding the production together was the main reason why this venture succeeded in the Diocese. Without that local strength, it would never have kept going as it did.

The other actual production was with the parish of Christ Church, Bradford, which did the Crucifixion reading from Dorothy Sayers' *Mary Born to be King*. Despite the large number of people involved, this was moved to several churches in Manchester.

On top of these productions, there were a considerable number of "talks" given and the usual advisory work of having to look at other people's efforts, and endeavour to proffer constructive criticism when asked!

While the Manchester season was in progress, the Adviser was also trying to get a Post-Easter programme organised. This entailed auditions in Durham with University students for an experimental tour in industry later in the year; planning the production in Sheffield of *Tobias* so that it would be possible to play in both the Mirfield Quarry and in local halls; and a hopeful scheme to produce Fry once again—this time in the Sheffield Training College for teachers.

A programme as extensive as this would not have been possible without the help of Jane Southern who came as an assistant from May to July, played the lead in *Tobias*, designed the costumes, combining in constructing them with the Sheffield wardrobe mistress, and "held the fort" while the Adviser was gallivanting in other areas.

The Sheffield Christian Community Players rose splendidly to the undertaking of *Tobias*. Transference from small parish halls to an open-air arena holding several thousands is no mean task. A lot of organisation was involved, including conveying everyone over to Mirfield for a rehearsal on a Saturday early in the season, so that the actors could have a clear grasp at an early date of what would be expected on Commemoration Day. The co-operation was splendid, and only one member of the cast failed to reach the Quarry after his morning's work. Tobit got there from the Lake District, where he was having his summer holiday. And the weather that day was superb.

Not so on the day of performance! Arriving for a "run through on the spot" on Commemoration Day itself, constant showers held up the action. Yet at 5 o'clock it did not rain and the play happened—the cast enjoying themselves no end, and one hopes the audience likewise.

Boy with a Cart took place at the Sheffield City Training College. The final rehearsals of this had to be left to Jane Southern, who got the show on while the Adviser was in the Durham Diocese.

She also was responsible for keeping *Tobias* in action in Sheffield, while the Adviser was contending with *T'Other Shift* in Durham with members of the University. This was a worthwhile experiment, as it was pioneer work to take prospective ordinands into the industrial world in a play which had been tried and tested by the Pilgrims. Though rehearsals were in Durham, performances were in Manchester—a procedure again involving a lot of planning, and quite impossible if the Manchester Religious Drama Committee (notably the Revd. D. N. A. Clegg) had not shouldered the weight of responsibility. Plans for billeting, meals, performances, transport and all the rest of it, take some doing. The effort was worthwhile when a management wrote that this was the first time in five years that the Church had given them real help. And in an account spontaneously submitted by an employee who attended, one reads: "The title of the play *T'Other Shift* and the fact that it was sponsored by the Manchester Diocesan Advisory Committee, aroused a slight suspicion that we were to be preached to—under cover of dialect. But it was not to be—we were entertained instead by a first-class dramatic presentation: a rigorous twenty minutes of drama, humour and pathos."

During all this time, efforts were being made to encourage Oliver Wilkinson to write a play to succeed *T'Other Shift*—again with the aid of the Sheffield Industrial Mission. A script eventually came and though too long for the lunch-break, and difficult for a producer not proficient in the differences among men in industry, it holds possibilities. Yet gathering together an all-male amateur cast that can play at lunch-time on the shop-floor, is a problem in itself. Clergy and Youth Leaders seemed to be the main hope in Sheffield and a group met for one reading. But again the problem of extremely busy people giving up time, necessitated a real sense of the play "being wanted." That sense is not there and the thing has consequently "stuck."

The autumn season began by a request to "talk" to a parish in

Manchester. This was just possible to fulfil because of a few days in Sheffield on the way to Durham. The momentary stay in the Sheffield diocese was in order to complete auditions and organisation of rehearsals in Doncaster for the proposed production of *Murder in the Cathedral* in 1958. One thought that at last the right plans were laid and work would be possible to start in January. Not so! In spite of letters and notifications and agreements from the proposed actors, the first week of work has meant seeing three-quarters of the requisite women and exactly two men. So time is wasted, which might so easily be used creatively.

The autumn in Durham began slowly. A totally different situation confronted the Adviser—and a good deal of “getting to know the ground” was involved. A number of talks to Ruri-decanal Conferences were planned for this purpose. At the same time an industrial parish went slowly into action with *Go Down, Moses*—slowly because there was a parish mission as soon as auditions had been done, and because acting was altogether new as an undertaking. The most rewarding thing about it ultimately was to see people who had never been on a stage, eventually able to lose themselves in what they were doing.

More important, and more difficult was the creation of a new play by Philip Turner with University students, and ultimately it went on for two nights with good audiences and apparent interest in the University. The author came, and has now re-written the play. This procedure is, in a sense, a fulfilment of one of the objectives of the Northern Committee when they made their five-year appointment.

A number of talks were also given by the Adviser inside the colleges to various groups of students. There is a possibility of a request for more religious drama in the next Durham season, and signs of the students wishing to form a University Religious Drama Group. This is unquestionably good ground if the idea becomes established—and the fact of prospective ordinands getting involved, should—in time—have far-reaching results.

Mention should be made of a week-end course which was held in the autumn at Hope at which students from the Manchester and Sheffield Dioceses were present. Miss Robins was the Tutor at this and bore the brunt of the unexpected illness of the second instructor. The Revd. D. N. A. Clegg also shouldered much of the burden of this disaster. The great thing about the week-end was the combination of students from both Dioceses.

Out of 1957 certain facts are clear, but our objectives remain the same as they were in the beginning.

The absolutely *vital* need is to keep the creative spark active in the work. Too great a weight of material difficulties and also too great a weight of criticism, because so many people are wanting so many different things, mean this spark may very easily be blown out.

The difficult business of trying to get scripts into existence is still the most important part of the work. There is also little doubt that actual performances carry more weight than just talking about the work. (I

would simply put in a plea for better preliminary planning over this!)

We are attempting a new play now at the beginning of 1958 in Sheffield—we have put on one at the end of 1957—we are trying to commission another for 1959. These are the events that really matter, if we can do them well.

Don't forget our

HOLIDAY COURSE OF RELIGIOUS DRAMA

AT

ST. LUKE'S COLLEGE
EXETER

FROM

MONDAY, AUGUST 11th

TO

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20th

The Theme:

“From Playwright's Idea to Curtain Up”

- * STAGE CRAFT * PRODUCTION AND ACTING
- * PREPARATION OF SCRIPT FOR PRODUCTION
- * THE STUDY OF POST-WAR DRAMA IN RELATION
TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

PLAYS

The Potting Shed. Graham Greene. (Heinemann, 8/6.) H. 3 acts. 6m., 5w.
Fully reviewed elsewhere in this issue. (Fee: apply publishers.)

Bitter Heart. G. R. Myers. (Epworth Press, 2/-.) H. 3 acts. 5w.

At last, a full length play for a small cast of women!

The friends of Beth, a lame girl of Galilee, want to take her to Christ for healing, but her mother, Mara, prevents them; Mara's baby son was killed at Bethlehem and she has hated Jesus ever since. Mara is present on Calvary, and hatred leaves her, but Beth has learned too much from her mother, and now hates her as bitterly for spoiling her last chance of a normal life.

Later, St. Peter is able to heal Beth's body, but not her mind. The miracle can only be complete when mother and daughter are reconciled.

The play is effectively written, with a good grasp of emotional climax, and we can recommend it to women's groups. (Fee: 10/6, 7/6.)

God With Us. Rosemary Stephens. (S.P.C.K., 1/3.) H., or open-air. Continuous action. 5m., 7w., 4 ch., 2 babies, tableau of Holy Family.

A Christmas play written for and performed by a Christian Hospital in Nigeria showing the Nativity story acted in the courtyard of a chief's house. The script is in "scenario" form: the substance of what is said is given, but the actual dialogue is to be improvised in the local vernacular (i.e. not English, unless English is regularly spoken by the players).

Helpful production notes, and suggestions for adaptation to conditions in different parts of Africa.

N.B. The play is intended as a teaching medium for adults, *not* school children. (No fee.)

How Far? arr. Ida M. Lloyd. (Oxford University Press, 2/6.) XH. 2 scenes. 3b., 1g., procession of children.

A simple carol play, based on carols from the **Oxford Book** and **Enlarged Songs of Praise**. (No fee.)

My Wondering Soul. Frank Cumbers. (Epworth Press, 2/-.) H. 3 acts. 14m. 6w., 3 ch., crowd (doubling poss.) (The life of Charles Wesley.)
(Fee: apply publishers.)

The Night has Stars. F. H. Wiseman. (Typescript.) H. 3 acts (6 scenes.) 6m. 4w. A play about Hosea and his unfaithful wife Gomer.

The slick over-luxurious decadence of Samaria at that time is clearly indicated by *Hosea* and *Amos*, so the author is justified in using the easy-going style of a modern comedy (like Gordon Daviot in *The Little Dry Thorn*). He tells the story mainly as a problem of human relations, leaving its meaning as a parable implicit until the final scenes.

Local groups may find the play too sophisticated in its approach for the audiences, and often its tone is too self-consciously hard-boiled to convince, but the ending is most moving, and there is much to interest enterprising producers. (Fee: apply author, c/o R.D.S.)

On Christmas Night. (Piano score.) Adolf Bolm and R. Vaughan Williams. (O.U.P. Music Dept., 6/-.) H. Large cast. Continuous action (about 30 mins.)

A masque, with dancing, singing and mime, freely adapted from "A Christmas Carol." Music has been arranged from folk songs, carols and country dances ("Hunsdon House," "Haste to the Wedding," etc.).

An instrumental score for a small orchestra is also obtainable. (Fee: apply publishers.)

CHRISTIAN DRAMA

The Opening of the Eyes. Ralph Gardner. (S.P.G., 6d.) H. 1 act (20 mins.) 2m., 3g.

Two friends and fellow patients, one African, one English, in hospital, on the day when both see for the first time. (Fee: apply publishers.)

The Picture in the Gallery. E. F. M. Baggaley. (M.M.S., 6d.) H. 1m., or w., 2w., tableau of Holy Family, African boy, children. 1 act (15 mins.).

A missionary playlet centred on a tableau "picture." (No fee.)

Six Plays for Girls. N. L. Clay. (Heinemann, 3/-.) Inc.: **The Innkeeper's Daughter.** H. 1 act. 10m., 3w. (Fee: apply publishers.)

The Treasure. Stella Martin Currey. (French, 4/-.) H. 5 scenes, Prologue (optional). 5m., 8w., singers.

A well-made full length play with a Christmas background, but not a Nativity play: suitable for more experienced amateur groups.

A Roman soldier is rescued from robbers by a young Bethlehem workman, makes friends with his family, and gives them a valuable silver bowl. This fraternisation between races and classes arouses enmity in the town, and only the birth of Christ restores peace. (Fee £2 2/-.)

REFERENCE BOOKS

Kirk and Drama. Alexander Reid. (The Gateway, Edinburgh, 1/-.)

The Gateway Theatre was founded in 1946 under the direct sponsorship of the Kirk of Scotland, and has flourished since as a home of worthwhile drama of all kinds. A leading Scottish writer here sets down some thoughts on its significance, and the relationship of the Arts to the Scots Church.

We hope to print part of this stimulating article in a future issue.

Music in the Theatre. Ronald Settle. (Herbert Jenkins, 5/-.) Practical Stage Handbooks series.

A helpful survey of the problems of incidental music: grams., tape-recordings, etc.

The Passion in Africa. John Taylor, photographs by Hans Leuenberger. (Mowbray, 25/-.)

A magnificent series of photographs of the Passion Play at Mukono, Uganda (some are reproduced elsewhere in this issue); with the full text of the Introduction by the Revd. John Taylor.

Quotations from appropriate Spirituals accompany the pictures.

The Social Life of a Jew in the Time of Christ. Khodadad E. Keith. (Church Missions to Jews, 2/6.)

Stories of the Law. W. N. Carter. (C.M.J., 2/6.)

Booklets packed with useful detail on Jewish life and manners, throwing new light on familiar Gospel stories. Recommended to producers and designers.

Stage Management. ed. Roy Stacey. (Stacey Publications, 2/-.)

A second, revised edition of this useful pamphlet.

Stage Scenery. Jenifer Wyatt. (Herbert Jenkins, 6/-.) Practical Stage Handbooks series.

An elementary text book on stage practice.

SPECIAL NOTES

Herod the Great. David Demarest Lloyd. (Typescript.) H. 9m., 2w., soldiers, etc., choir. 2 acts (4 scenes).

Presented in 1956 by the Broadway Chapel Players of New York in the Church of St. Clement, Alexandria, Virginia.

Taking the Biblical account of the visit of the Wise Men to Herod and the subsequent Massacre of the Innocents. Mr. Lloyd has focused attention on Herod's problem as a King and as an individual. For once Herod is sympathetically treated. He himself has sacrificed everything, even honour and personal affections—as, it is implied, a ruler must—for the sake of peace in Judea. He looks upon the massacre as necessary surgery to save the body politic, and in its impersonal context we are led to feel that this is almost reasonable. Only the death of his own grandson at Bethlehem, by accident, shocks him—and us—into understanding and penitence.

“Thinking to build the future, I have destroyed it.
Acting by the light of reason, I have murdered children.”

It is easy to see the significance of this Herod to a post-Hiroshima world, and why Mr. Lloyd deliberately sacrifices historical fact to the demands of his modern theme. (We are so used to a boggy-man Herod that one can be too ready to reject any signs of humanity in him. At the same time, the known facts really will not support Herod's domesticity in this play, nor his final repentance.)

The programme note says: “This play is not a historical treatment . . . The author and the players . . . are asserting . . . that any ruler no matter how reasonable his motives is led into sin, that the conflict between human goals and divine judgement is irreconcilable except by the Son of Man . . .”

Herod the Great has dramatic force and insight; some critics have thought it overwritten, and occasional mixtures of idiom occur (“This thing has gotten noised abroad”), but the reactions of American audiences have been very favourable.

It is suitable only for experienced players.

(Fee and all enquiries: apply D. Lloyd, 349 East 49th St., New York, 17.)

Museum Piece. Richard Tydeman. (Faith Press, 2/6.) H. 5m., 3w., Continuous action.

The Museum Piece is a broken group of statuary: Faith and Hope. Charity is missing (lost during the war). The Guide to the museum is the Archangel Raphael in disguise, while Satan is present as an Old Man among the visitors on a tour of the exhibits.

Later the figures descend from their plinth, and the visitors who stared and giggled in blank incomprehension are brought back in a “dream sequence,” to learn something of the real meaning of the three Virtues.

They enact episodes from their past lives which show their reliance on Faith in everyday life, their experiences of Hope, and the wrong and the right meanings of Charity. A Cross is erected between Faith and Hope, and the Museum Piece is complete at last.

The play ends with a hint that, even as a design, it is perhaps not such a Museum Piece after all. Have we seen it before somewhere?

This play is really an animated discussion. Only production can decide if it is also drama, and how easily its train of thought can be grasped in performance. It reads clearly and cogently however, and has some very neat pictorial devices which suggest that the play would well repay experiment.

Above all it has something definite to say, and says it without fuss. Groups interested in evangelism through drama should read it. No sets or special costumes are required, so it could be toured, but it is not designed for church production (Fee: apply author, c/o publishers.)

FAR AND WIDE

Reports and Reviews of Christian Drama Activities in Great Britain and Overseas

Cambridge

The House by the Stable and *Grab and Grace* were produced by Graham Suter under the auspices of the Student Christian Movement on November 27th and 29th in King's College Hall, Cambridge.

Everyone who saw this play, for the two were treated as one, must surely have been impressed by the quality of performance of the actors, and Mr. Suter must be warmly congratulated that in the short time available he achieved so finished a production. Clearly a great deal of hard work had been put in by all concerned, and it was refreshing to find in Cambridge plays treated in performance with the seriousness they deserve.

Charles Williams compels one to live in two worlds at the same time. Spiritual realities and conflicts are faced and fought out in the soul of Man in all the rather ordinary and dull events of his daily life. Thus in the apparent accident of a wayfaring man and his wife asking for shelter, the struggle in Man between his Pride and the promptings of Gabriel is revealed. We never understand completely but we are given hints and insights into that life. It is not altogether surprising, therefore, that one felt the actors themselves were a little unsure at times, as to which world they were in at any particular moment, and there were times when Gabriel exhibited that surprise which is perhaps right for an Archangel dressed in the guise of a butler! Here, let it be said, it seemed entirely right that this play should be performed in modern dress.

This play was an obvious attempt to make religious drama out of Church on to a secular stage, and this is to be commended. But the choice of King's Hall was not a happy one. The actors found the acoustics very difficult, so that words were often lost. The production was clearly intended for a smaller hall where there would have been a more intimate atmosphere.

Charles Williams has given us here a medieval morality play in a modern setting. He takes us into the highest flights of mysticism. Often we cannot understand, and he himself used to say it was not necessary to understand, but we can dimly see and experience. We come out from this play, as from any great play, with a sense of being purified.

But this play is also good evangelism. There is no attempt at preaching or moralising, yet it is deeply challenging, and its essential message comes through clearly enough for the simplest audience to grasp.—GEOFFREY PEARSON, S.S.F.

* * *

Church Stretton, Shropshire

Ruth Draper, Joyce Grenfell, Emlyn Williams have all shown what heights of dramatic presentation can be achieved by one person alone on the stage. It is rare for their solo-art to enter the amateur world, but Grace Benton of Warwick did so successfully recently at Church Stretton. Moreover, she writes her own one-act plays and so is in closest sympathy with her subject.

Her presentation of the personality of the great prison-reform pioneer, Elizabeth Fry, is vivid and effective. We live for an hour with the woman behind the work. Her simplicity, purity, dedication and deep faith in God; her love for her family and her sisters in gaol; her utter devotion to Christ, all these shine clearly. One knows a great Christian more intimately through Grace Benton's performance.

Her "Gran" is also most moving—a picture of a simple, homely old lady, and her faith in God and her concern for those He has given her as relatives and neighbours, until the hour He calls her to Himself. It is to be hoped that many audiences in other parts of England will share our privilege at Church Stretton.—A.K.

Coventry

Recently in Coventry there was a production of the rarely performed play *The True Mystery of the Nativity*. This is part of the French Medieval Mystery Cycle of Arnoul and Simon Greban, translated into English by James Kirkup. The performance took place immediately after Evensong in the nineteenth-century church of St. Mark, and the actors were people of this industrial parish. The plain white walls of the chancel and nave and the subdued tall reredos were good substitutes for the open wagon used for entertaining our medieval forebears, and the producer found it necessary only to erect a triptych, through which entrances and exits were made at three points.

This play, written in its original form towards the end of the fifteenth century, is in nine short scenes, with a Prologue and Epilogue, relieved and emphasised by carols of an unseen choir. For the main part, the language is in couplet form, and in the simplest style. There are no odd-sounding words and phrases that delight us in the plays of Chester and Coventry, for instance, and here perhaps we lose by using a translation. At the same time, there seems to be an attempt to achieve this essence of medievalism in the humour—"We don't know very much book learning and all that stuff": here there is surely the suspicion of colloquialism.

The birth of Christ at the central point of the play is a beautiful idea. Mary prays: "O God, be tender and observant; Be with me now, Thy true and faithful servant." The lights fade and the choir sings from the English Hymnal "Let all mortal flesh keep silence." Here, in the ultimate action of the story, are felt the full qualities of the miraculous, of reverence and Christian belief.

In Coventry, anyway, too few nativity plays have been performed this Christmas. Had other Church Drama Groups and clergy seen the play in St. Mark's Church, I think they would have realised how deeply such a play affects the imagination of the audience and produces a sense of worship and humility. This, surely, is a major

means of inducing outsiders to Church, and of presenting them with a sense of the true mystery of the nativity.—J.S.

* * *

Derby

With a minimum but expert use of their lighting the Derby Guild of Religious Drama staged the newly-published one-act play *The Word* by Marion Jay, at St. Edmund's Church, Allenton. Scenes of the Nativity were beautifully mimed and punctuated by a hidden choir. The performance was quite unmarred by first night nerves. There were no hitches and no fumbled lines or cues. The three narrators were dressed in costumes copied from the Rembrandt period and the scenes were based on the artist's Biblical paintings. The somewhat difficult task of timing action with an offstage commentary was brought off remarkably well and the acting was as fluent as the chorus.

As usual with the Guild the cast was not named. It would however be fair to single out two of the kings—regal Jamaicans—for their majestic bearing.

The play was particularly well received by the inmates of the "Prison without Bars" at Sudbury.

In a speech of thanks by the Governor, the cast were requested especially to remember all the inmates at Christmas in our prayers. This was, of course, done. Also, we had the idea to send them copies of various scenes which had been photographed by one of our members during the performance. These were sent in the form of Christmas cards.

* * *

Earl Shilton, Leics.

On January 6th and 7th, Earl Shilton Players, a group of amateurs interested in religious drama, and drawn from different churches in this large industrial village, gave performances of Henri Ghéon's *Christmas in the Market Place* in the English adaptation of Eric Crozier. The first production by the group, a Passion Play specially written for the village, was performed in the parish church on a trestle stage and was very impressive. It was decided, though, to do the Christmas Play in the Working Men's Club, in the hope

CHRISTIAN DRAMA

that some would come to see it who would be unwilling to enter a church, even to see a play.

The effectiveness of the play lies in the fact that it is a play within a play, that these ragged outcasts of society become the people of the Nativity story, while at the same time remaining very much themselves—sharp-witted, earthily pious. The chief drawback of the play, as far as Earl Shilton was concerned, was that it was written in 1935 for a French audience. These colourful French gypsies are hardly familiar figures in Earl Shilton. There was some fine and lively acting, and some moving episodes, but the stolid silence of the audience to begin with, even during some of the funniest passages, showed that there was for a long time a general feeling of bewilderment—and perhaps, too, of dismay! Towards the end, however, the audience caught the mood of the play and began to respond happily. So perhaps *some* of the play's ideas were put across, for instance that the Incarnation is a matter for the street as well as for the church, and that laughter and fun, far from being disrespectful, are often the true expressions of a vital faith.—J.C.

* * *

Paddock Wood, Kent

"The boys and girls of Paddock Wood set out to take birthday presents to the Babe of Bethlehem. Like the Wise Men of old they follow a star, and the star leads them to the Church where the story is being enacted. They follow the Wise Men and present their gifts. Charlie, the poor boy, has none, but finds it in his power to give the best of all—his heart." This synopsis was printed on the programmes for all to read and ponder, and I feel certain that the presentation of the play *Come and Behold Him* by Vera G. Cumberge, will long be remembered.

On two nights a full Church experienced many heights of worship and devotion by the training of an inexperienced cast by a sound producer. The producer is to be congratulated on the clever way she used the opportunities available to her, by the architecture of this new church, to link the scenes together in a final and glorious spectacle, in a spacious chancel, very

rarely seen. I came away feeling I had visited the Manger, sharing a fellowship with a big family.

I am delighted to hear that two pounds were set aside for the R.D. Society out of the collections. I once heard Miss Keily say at a Council Meeting that a sum, however small, would make a difference to the finances if all who do this work sent a gift. I wonder if many do?—P.M.B.

* * *

Penarth, Glam.

Trinity Drama Group

I was in Prison did not sound an attractive title for an evening out, yet the high drama and dedication of a noble woman left audiences uplifted and inspired with the sense of an evening very well spent indeed.

Beautifully produced by Sheila Gibbs, the prison scene, with its clever lighting and surges of unbridled passions by the "scum" of female prisoners, was the dramatic and emotional highlight of the evening.

The play was presented for six nights and played to full houses in a hall holding over 200 people. It was supported by members of other Churches and block-booking arrangements were made. It was a talking point for some time afterwards.

This play, with its twelve splendid women's parts, is particularly suited to amateur groups. The change of scene, from the comfortable Fry Home to Newgate Prison, was achieved by running flats in Act II in front of the permanent set and removing the centre windows to give an effect of space and light.—J.G.

* * *

Plymouth, Devon

The Builders is a new play by R. H. Ward, especially written for the Re-Consecration of St. Andrew's Church, Plymouth, destroyed by bombing during the war. It was a fitting inclusion in our week of festivities over the Re-Consecration; well attended, and I think those who saw it will long remember the evening. It was more a spiritual experience than a visit to the drama. It got across in no uncertain terms, more than any other play I have seen, the all important truth

that the Church of God built in the lives of men and women is the true Church. The Church built in bricks and mortar, built by hands, is only incidental.

The Builders was sincerely and most adequately performed by the cast, using rostra up to six feet in height in the wide, empty chancel of the church. St. Andrew, homely and likeable, is concerned with the restoration of the church, after an impressive scene depicting its destruction in the blitz. St. Francis, witty and devout, spends his time restoring the soul of a sailor who has wandered into the church. A man and a woman (they have no name for they might be any man and woman) have important parts to play for they show us human nature. The sailor is not very impressed, and neither are we, until through the eyes of St. Francis he begins to see in them the Likeness of God's Image. Even then he has a struggle to treat them with brotherly love—not surprisingly, since he is somewhat of a sinner himself! But St. Francis works hard to bring him to the feet of Christ. As the sailor himself changes, so does his attitude. A member of the audience would have to be very insensitive to remain a "spectator."

The play is cleverly written, the dialogue itself being sufficient to hold the attention. It has some lovely scenes—St. Francis teaching the sailor to say "Our Father" and mean it; the enthusiasm of St. Andrew as he leads off a volunteer to help in the rebuilding; the man and the woman holding her baby, a picture of Mary and Joseph with the Christchild. The spirit of Christmas is in this play, the spirit of birth and rebirth—the rebirth of a church, the rebirth of men and women.

J.P.

* * *

Redhill, Surrey

The Reigate and Redhill Council of Churches have kept up their tradition of putting on a play as a united effort every other year. Last November they were fortunate in having Mr. Richard Baldwyn to direct the production. *The*

Prodigal Son by R. H. Ward was the chosen play, and the company of six players toured a number of churches in the area. I myself and the congregation of St. John's Church, Redhill, very much enjoyed seeing this play presented on the night of my visit.

This was an intelligent production, the players understanding the implications of the play, and presenting it with clarity and vitality. The principal part is far from easy for it covers a wide range of mood. The young man playing this encompassed most of these and won our affection, but lack of experience prevented his achieving that restive gaiety and impetuous fire of the Prodigal, so his performance did not give the full force of contrast.

The scene in the "far country" is brief, and there is little to help the lonely player here to convey the mood, "The power of dancing, the noise of music. . . ." Music might well have come to his aid, but that, too, failed at this moment, though at other times the organ music was most effective. Later when the Prodigal sinks into suffering and despair this player seemed more at ease in the part, and his home-coming and repentance was most movingly played by both Father and Son. Nowadays when it is considered non-U to say, "I am sorry," this play has much to teach us. For here, the Father in all love, insists that the Prodigal should ask for forgiveness. Directly he asks, he receives it in rich measure. No scenery is needed in this play, and none was used, but the built-up play-space and excellent unobtrusive lighting enabled us to see the players well, and I liked their modern costume. Perhaps more use could have been made of the whole church, some of the entrances and exits being at the west end. This might have been effective for the Prodigal's return, and his call—"Father."

Once again the indefatigable Mr. Stanley Collett, as secretary of the Drama Committee responsible for the tour, has borne the burden of the organisation and publicity. I doubt whether the production could have taken place without him and his selfless, persistent work. What should we do without such people?—C.R.

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Reigate, Surrey

Christmas at the Crossroads, a modern pastoral in three acts by Henri Brochet, is one of the many efforts in literature to visualise the Incarnation in terms of the author's own time and country. Its production by St. Mark's Players in St. Mark's Hall, Reigate, was notably successful and impressed the audiences on both the evenings it was presented.

The play is set in France at the close of the last war, and the first two acts take place in the tumble-down inn of Madame Morvan, a hard, embittered widow whose husband left her for another woman when their sixteen-years-old blind daughter was killed in the war. The one room she has to rent has been taken by the wealthy Cousin Adele, widow of a Nazi collaborator, come to town for the census registration. A young girl, Hope, and her grandfather, Old Leleu, unable to find accommodation in the over-full town, seek shelter for the night, and are rudgingly allowed a corner, but Madame Morvan turns away a wandering carpenter and his wife, despite the fact that their child is about to be born. The old man insists on finding this couple and brings the carpenter back to beg for hot water and blankets. The landlady gradually relents, and even accommodates Hope and Leleu when they go to the ruined Crèche where Joseph and Mary have found shelter. The third act shows the three of them outside the Crèche just before midnight on Christmas Eve. Joseph removes the blanket he has stretched across the opening to try and protect his wife, and Mary is revealed with the new-born child. They are joined by Cousin Adele and Narcissus, the Rural Policeman, and all are witnesses to the nativity, although it is obvious that only Hope realises the Great Truth.

by permission of the "Surrey Mirror."

* * *

St. Peter-upon-Cornhill, London

This being the twelfth successive year of the St. Peter plays, they departed from their usual custom of presenting the Medieval Mysteries, and although the period remained the same, they gave us a new play, *Murder Mediaeval*,

written by the Rector's wife, Patricia Owen.

The story is based on the historic fact of the murder of a deacon of St. Peter's. There are some colourful scenes, and though the script is somewhat sketchy at times the play comes alive, and we all enjoyed the performance. Their producer is a man of considerable experience, and I found it a real pleasure to watch a performance of this quality. The cast were, on the whole, quite at home in their parts, entering fully into them with enjoyment. Careful attention had been given to lighting, costumes, wigs and make-up. The acoustics of this small, compact church are excellent, and we heard every word with ease.

One criticism I have is that the play is not really suitable for church production, but would have been much better in a hall. There are several reasons for this, the most practical being that it requires scenery and the masking of the East End. I look forward to seeing more plays written and produced by St. Peter's Players.

CARINA ROBINS.

* * *

Wanstead, Essex

It was a *Pilgrim's Progress* for the audience as well as for the Congregational Players when Rodney Bennett's dramatisation of Bunyan's allegory was given in January, for it was snowing heavily, and—on the first night at all events—the audience was smallish and coldish (physically, though that always affects the temperature of its response).

One came away admiring a design and intention which—largely owing to the 'flu epidemic—did not quite come off on that night but may well have done so at the two succeeding performances. Immensely aided by the Rev. Geoffrey Beaumont's music (Keele Summer School students will remember the recording of his *Modern Mass*) for Bunyan's hymns, the Producer (the Rev. F. H. Wiseman, himself a playwright) had decided to go all modern, retaining Puritan dress for only Bunyan and the Gaoler. So we had a Christian in battle-dress, setting forth and leaving his wife plying her sewing machine in a fine fury. The "arming" scene was

well designed, using a clear blue wind-cheater, and with the early Christian "fish" symbol on belt-clasp and the Chi-Rho on beret-badge; this was particularly effective in the meeting of Christian and Faithful. "Vanity Fair" gave enormous scope, not only for the inevitable Teddy Boys and Girls, but for booths selling the sham psychology and "relaxers" of our day.

An imaginative touch revealed the most flamboyant Teddy Boy to be Hopeful! All this was thought-compelling . . . and yet for all Rodney Bennett's slight modernisation of language, it remained "period"—as indeed, Bunyan lovers will always wish. Is there a truly modern *Pilgrim's Progress* to be written in Twentieth Century terms from the very foundation?

The music was delightful, particularly "Who would true valour see," which was both vigorous and haunting.—J.P.

* * *

Westminster Weekend School of Contemporary Drama

The experiment of holding a School in the heart of London was fully justified. No village community could have shown more friendliness or enthusiasm than the hundred students, drawn from all quarters of the capital, which filled St. John's Hall, Westminster, on January 31st and February 1st.

Not a moment was wasted: we were given drama in concentrated essence. After the opening by the Dean of Westminster, Miss Carina Robins gave a concise and practical talk on "The work of the Christian producer." Then we divided into groups under the direction of Miss Ursula Nicholl, Mr. R. H. Ward and Mr. David Giles, meeting again for closing prayers which were said by the Rev. G. Fox, Vicar of St. Etheldreda's, Fulham.

On Saturday we listened to an inspiring talk on "Christian Drama—Why Contemporary?" by Mr. Martin Browne, and to "Staging in Three Stages" by Mr. R. H. Ward. In the evening came demonstrations of the work attempted by the groups. It was amazing that so much could have been accomplished in such a short time, but we knew that the greatest value lay in

the many ideas we were taking home to digest at our leisure.

We were glad to welcome the Very Rev. Dr. R. F. V. Scott, D.D., of St. Columba's Church, who spent the evening with us and said the closing prayers.

Miss Ursula Nicholl and Miss Constance Gregory did not forget that hard work produces keen appetites. Delicious teas and supper were provided and administered with lightning speed by members of the Y.W.C.A. Girl Guides, and other helpers.—K.B.

* * *

York (St. John's College)

Philip Lamb's further revision of his well-known play *Sons of Adam* (first published in 1944) is a considerable advance on previous versions (and this should not be understood as a derogatory remark!) It stands as a monument to his devotion and his craftsmanship that he has wrestled with "in the workshop" so to speak, until he was satisfied that what he wanted to do and to say had been done and said. Stronger in verse, tighter in dramatic form and with further material, it now provides an admirable addition to our much needed library of suitable plays.

It is exciting because it is, in my judgement, the most successful attempt so far, of giving us in a grand sweep the Biblical Message. In an hour, of course, much has to be left out. But in a remarkable way we are transported into the history of God's people, and there is always a contemporary ring in the writing.

No praise can be too high for the producer. With an augmented college group (St. John's is a college for men) she gave us a production sharp as a razor edge, strong in conception, full of movement and simple in stage design (with a daringly successful use of colour).

Of course the conventions used are still strange to some. But this production was a reminder of the great contribution which religious drama has made to the English theatre in the flight from naturalism to stylisation. It is, of course, only one way, but it will serve us well for a long time, for it has the

CHRISTIAN DRAMA

inship with the liturgy which makes this type of Christian drama so distinctively successful.

It was the whole impact of author, producer and company which made the evening memorable. The music did not mind the play as it should have done, and there was the occasional lapse in concentration, but this play is strong meat. All concerned were indeed worthy of one another.

Thus when at the end they spoke:

"Five men and four women—the
players,

Have played you the play of
salvation,

Our salvation and yours"

we had lived through an experience
and in faith had grasped the meaning.
The author could wish no more.

F. J. GLENDENNING.

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